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(CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY.)

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—At her home in the Street, Sidney Page agrees to marry Joe Drummond "after years and years" she talks to K. Le Moyne, the new roomer.

CHAPTER II—Sidney's aunt Harriet, who has been dressmaking with Sidney's mother, launches an independent modiste's parlor. Sidney gets Dr. Ed Wilson's influence with his brother, Doctor Max, the successful young surgeon, to place her in the hospital as a probationer nurse.

CHAPTER III—K. becomes acquainted in the Street. Sidney asks him to stay on as a roomer and explains her plans for financing her home while she is in the school.

CHAPTER IV—Doctor Max gets Sidney into the hospital school.

CHAPTER V—Sidney and K. spend an afternoon in the country. Sidney falls into the river.

CHAPTER VI—Max asks Carlotta Harrison, a probationer, to take a motor ride with him. Joe finds Sidney and K. at the country hotel, where Sidney is drying her clothes, and is insanely jealous.

CHAPTER VII.

Sidney and K. Le Moyne were dining together at the White Springs hotel. The novelty of the experience had made her eyes shine like stars. She saw only the magnolia tree shaped like a heart, the terrace edged with low shrubbery, and beyond the faint gleam that was the river. The unshaded glare of the lights behind her in the house was eclipsed by the crescent edge of the rising moon. Dinner was over. Sidney was experiencing the rare treat of after-dinner coffee.

Le Moyne, grave and contained, sat across from her. To give so much pleasure, and so easily! How young she was, and radiant! No wonder the boy was mad about her. She fairly held out her arms to life.

Ah, that was too bad! Another table was being brought; they were not to be alone. But what roused in him violent resentment only appealed to Sidney's curiosity.

Carlotta Harrison came out alone. Although the tapping of her heels was dulled by the grass, although she had exchanged her cap for the black hat, Sidney knew her at once. A sort of thrill ran over her. It was the pretty nurse from Doctor Wilson's office. Was it possible—but of course not! The book of rules stated explicitly that such things were forbidden.

"Don't turn around," she said swiftly. "It is the Miss Harrison I told you about. She is looking at us."

Carlotta's eyes were blinded for a moment by the glare of the house lights. Then she sat up, her eyes on Le Moyne's grave profile turned toward the valley. Lucky for her that Wilson had stopped in the bar, that Sidney's instinctive good manners forbade her staring, that only the edge of the summer moon shone through the trees. She went white and clutched

She Went White and Clutched the Edge of the Table.

the edge of the table, with her eyes closed. That gave her quick brain a chance. It was madness, June madness. She was always seeing him, even in her dreams. This man was older, much older. She looked again.

She had not been mistaken. Here, and after all these months! K. Le Moyne, quite unconscious of her presence, looked down into the valley.

Wilson appeared on the wooden porch above the terrace, and stood, his eyes searching the half-light for her. If he came down to her, the man at the next table might turn, would see her—

She rose and went swiftly back toward the hotel. All the gayety was gone out of the evening for her, but she forced a lightness she did not feel:

"It is so dark and depressing out there—it makes me sad."

"Surely you do not want to dine in the house?"

"Do you mind?"

"Your wish is my law—tonight," he said softly.

After all, the evening was a disappointment to him. The spontaneity had gone out of it, for some reason. The girl who had thrilled to his glance those two mornings in his office, whose somber eyes had met his, fire for fire, across the operating room, was not playing up. She sat back in her chair, eating little, starting at every step. Her eyes, which by every rule of the game should have been gazing into his, were fixed on the oilcloth-covered passage outside the door.

"I think, after all, you are frightened!"

"Terribly."

"A little danger adds to the zest of things. You know what Nietzsche says about that."

"I am not fond of Nietzsche." Then, with an effort: "What does he say?"

"'Two things are wanted by the true man—danger and play. Therefore he seeketh woman as the most dangerous of toys.'"

"Women are dangerous only when you think of them as toys. When a man finds that a woman can reason—do anything but feel—he regards her as a menace. But the reasoning woman is really less dangerous than the other sort."

This was more like the real thing. To talk careful abstractions like this, with beneath each abstraction its concealed personal application, to talk of woman and look in her eyes, to discuss new philosophies with their freedoms, to discard old creeds and old moralities—that was his game. Wilson became content, interested again. The girl was nimble-minded. She challenged his philosophy and gave him a chance to defend it. With the conviction, as their meal went on, that Le Moyne and his companion must surely have gone, she gained ease.

It was only by wild driving that she got back to the hospital by ten o'clock.

Wilson left her at the corner, well content with himself. As he drove up the Street he glanced across at the Page house. Sidney was there on the doorstep, talking to a tall man who stood below and looked up at her. Wilson settled his tie, in the darkness. Sidney was a mighty pretty girl. The June night was in his blood. He was sorry he had not kissed Carlotta good night. He rather thought, now he looked back, she had expected it.

As he got out of his car at the curb, a young man who had been standing in the shadow of the treebox moved quickly away.

Wilson smiled after him in the darkness.

"That you, Joe?" he called.

But the boy went on.

* * * * * * *

Sidney entered the hospital as a probationer early in August. Christine was to be married in September to Palmer Howe, and, with Harriet and K. in the house, she felt that she could safely leave her mother.

The balcony outside the parlor was already under way. On the night before she went away Sidney took chairs out there and sat with her mother until the dew drove Anna to the lamp in the sewing room and her "Daily Thoughts" reading.

Sidney sat alone and viewed her world from this new and pleasant angle. She could see the garden and the whitewashed fence with its morning glories, and at the same time, by turning her head, view the Wilson house across the Street. She looked mostly at the Wilson house.

K. Le Moyne was upstairs in his room. She could hear him tramping up and down, and catch, occasionally, the bitter-sweet odor of his old brier pipe.

All the small loose ends of her life were gathered up—except Joe. She would have liked to get that clear, too. She wanted him to know how she felt about it all—that she liked him as much as ever, that she did not want to hurt him. But she wanted to make it clear, too, that she knew now that she would never marry him. She thought she would never marry; but, if she did, it would be a man doing a man's work in the world. Her eyes turned wistfully to the house across the Street.

K.'s lamp still burned overhead, but his restless tramping about had ceased. He must be reading—he read a great deal. She really ought to go to bed. A neighborhood cat came stealthily across the Street, and stared up at the little balcony with green-glowing eyes.

"Come on, Bill Taft," she said. "Come on."

Joe Drummond, passing the house for the fourth time that evening, heard her voice, and hesitated uncertainly on the pavement.

"Joe! Come in."

"It's late; I'd better get home."

The misery in his voice hurt her.

"I'll not keep you long. I want to talk to you."

He came slowly toward her.

"Well?" he said hoarsely.

"Why haven't you been to see me? If I have done anything—" Her voice was a-tingle with virtue and outraged friendship.

"You haven't done anything but—show me where I get off."

He sat down on the edge of the balcony and stared out blankly.

"If that's the way you feel about it—"

"I'm not blaming you. I was a fool to think you'd ever care about me. I don't know that I feel so bad—about the thing. I've been around seeing some other girls, and I notice they're glad to see me, and treat me right, too." There was boyish bravado in his voice. "But what makes me sick is to have everyone saying you've jilted me."

"Good gracious! Why, Joe, I never promised."

"Well, we look at it in different ways; that's all. I took it for a promise."

Then suddenly all his carefully conserved indifference fled. He bent forward quickly, and, catching her hand, held it against his lips.

"I'm crazy about you, Sidney. That's the truth. I wish I could die!"

The cat, finding no active antagonism, sprang up on the balcony and rubbed against the boy's quivering shoulders; a breath of air stroked the morning-glory vine like the touch of a friendly hand. Sidney, facing for the first time the enigma of love and despair, sat, rather frightened, in her chair.

"You don't mean that!"

"I mean it, all right. If it wasn't for the folks, I'd jump in the river. I lied when I said I'd been to see other girls. What do I want with other girls? I want you!"

"This is wild, silly talk. You'll be sorry tomorrow."

"It's the truth," doggedly.

But he made a clutch at his self-respect. He was acting like a crazy boy, and he was a man, all of twenty-two!

"When are you going to the hospital?"

"Tomorrow."

"Is that Wilson's hospital?"

"Yes."

Alas for his resolve! The red haze of jealousy came again. "You'll be seeing him every day, I suppose."

"I dare say. I shall also be seeing twenty or thirty other doctors, and a hundred or so men patients, not to mention visitors. Joe, you're not rational."

"No," he said heavily, "I'm not. If it's got to be someone, Sidney, I'd rather have it the roomer upstairs than Wilson. There's a lot of talk about Wilson."

"It isn't necessary to malign my friends."

He rose.

"Wilson had better look out. I'll be watching. If I see him playing any of his tricks around you—well, he'd better look out!"

That, as it turned out, was Joe's farewell. He had reached the breaking-point. He gave her a long look, blinked, and walked rapidly out to the Street. Some of the dignity of his retreat was lost by the fact that the cat followed him, close at his heels.

Sidney was hurt, greatly troubled. She even shed a tear or two, very surreptitiously; and then, being human and much upset, and the cat startling her by its sudden return, she shooed it off the veranda and set an imaginary dog after it. Whereupon, feeling somewhat better, she went in and locked the balcony window and proceeded upstairs.

Le Moyne's light was still going. The rest of the household slept. She paused outside the door.

"Are you sleepy?"—very softly.

There was a movement inside, the sound of a book put down. Then: "No, indeed."

"I may not see you in the morning. I leave tomorrow."

"Just a minute."

From the sounds, she judged that he was putting on his shabby gray coat. The next moment he had opened the door and stepped out into the corridor.

"I believe you had forgotten!"

"I? Certainly not. I started downstairs a while ago, but you had a visitor."

"Only Joe Drummond."

He gazed down at her quizzically.

"And—is Joe more reasonable?"

He will be. He knows that I—that I shall not marry him."

"Poor chap! He'll buck up, of course. But it's a little hard just now. When do you leave?"

"Just after breakfast."

"I am going very early. Perhaps—"

He hesitated. Then, hurriedly:

"I got a little present for you—nothing much, but your mother was quite willing. In fact, we bought it together."

He went back into his room, and returned with a small box. She opened it with excited fingers. Ticking away on its satin bed was a small gold watch.

"You'll need it, you see," he explained nervously.

"A watch," said Sidney, eyes on it. "A dear little watch, to pin on and not put in a pocket. Why, you're the best person!"

"I was afraid you might think it presumptuous," he said. "I haven't any right, of course. And then, your mother said you wouldn't be offended—"

"Don't apologize for making me so happy!" she cried. "It's wonderful, really. And the little hand is for pulses! How many queer things you know!"

After that she must pin it on, and slip in to stand before his mirror and inspect the result. It gave Le Moyne a queer thrill to see her there in the room, among his books and his pipes. It made him a little sick, too, in view of tomorrow and the thousand-odd tomorrows when she would not be there.

"I've kept you up shamefully," she said at last, "and you get up so early. I shall write you a note from the hospital, delivering a little lecture on extravagance—because how can I now, with this joy shining on me? And about how to keep Katie in order about your socks, and all sorts of things. And—and now, good night."

She had moved to the door, and he followed her, stooping a little to pass under the low chandelier.

"Good night," said Sidney.

"Good-by—and God bless you."

She went out, and he closed the door softly behind her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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